

Submitter: Leslie Fager
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Rules
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB210

Committee Chair and members of the committee,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to Senate Bill 210, which would make in-person voting on election day the standard method for conducting elections in Oregon. This bill represents a significant step backward in ensuring equitable and accessible elections for all Oregonians.

The current vote-by-mail system has proven to be highly successful in increasing voter participation and accessibility. Reverting to in-person voting as the standard would create numerous barriers, particularly for marginalized communities and individuals facing various challenges.

Here are the key reasons why SB 210 should not pass:

1. Reduced Accessibility for Vulnerable Populations:

Many Oregonians, including seniors, individuals with disabilities, and those living in rural areas, lack reliable transportation to polling places.

Requiring in-person voting would disproportionately affect those with mobility impairments, making it extremely difficult or impossible for them to exercise their right to vote.

Those with disabilities that cause them to have to stay home, would be effectively disenfranchised.

2. Economic Disparities:

Working-class individuals and those with inflexible work schedules may not be able to take time off to vote on election day, leading to voter suppression.

Long wait times at polling places can further exacerbate this issue, creating an undue burden on those who cannot afford to miss work.

Those who are paid hourly, or do not have paid time off, would be forced to choose between income and voting.

3. Transportation Barriers:

Oregon has large rural areas where public transportation is limited or non-existent.

Travel distances to polling locations may be significant, posing a substantial obstacle for those without personal vehicles.

4. Identification Requirements:

Requiring specific forms of government-issued identification, such as birth

certificates, would disenfranchise individuals who have changed their names due to marriage, divorce, or gender transition, as well as those who may have lost or never obtained such documents.

This requirement creates an unnecessary hurdle for those who are already facing systemic barriers.

Many people, especially within elderly populations do not have access to obtain such documents.

5. Increased Congestion and Wait Times:

Switching to in-person voting would likely lead to long lines and congestion at polling places, potentially deterring voters from casting their ballots.

This can create a chaotic and stressful voting environment, particularly for those with limited time or patience.

6. Security and Accuracy of Vote-by-Mail:

Oregon's vote-by-mail system has a proven track record of security and accuracy.

It includes numerous safeguards, such as signature verification and ballot tracking, to ensure the integrity of the election process.

In-person voting can be more susceptible to errors and malicious action.

7. Undue burden on election workers:

The change from a mail-in system to an in-person system would require a massive increase in election workers, and polling locations. This would create a large financial burden on counties.

Training large numbers of election workers in a short amount of time, creates the possibility of errors.

Oregon's vote-by-mail system has been a model for other states, demonstrating that accessible and secure elections are possible. SB 210 would undermine this progress and create unnecessary barriers for Oregon voters. I urge the committee to reject this bill and preserve Oregon's commitment to accessible and equitable elections.

Sincerely,
Leslie Fager